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In the claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (currently amended) A method of identifying a ligand of a bacterial  $\sigma^{70}$  subunit which comprises contacting the  $\sigma^{70}$  subunit, or a portion thereof comprising the anti- $\sigma^{70}$  binding region, with a test compound and a GST-AsiA fusion protein of an anti- $\sigma^{70}$  factor of bacteriophage T<sub>4</sub>, and produced in a yeast expression system; determining whether the test compound binds competitively with the ~~anti- $\sigma^{70}$  factor~~ AsiA-protein component of the fusion protein to the  $\sigma^{70}$  subunit or portion thereof; and identifying any such competitively binding test compound as a ligand of the bacterial  $\sigma^{70}$  subunit.
2. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1, which comprises:
  - (i) immobilizing the  $\sigma^{70}$  subunit or portion thereof on a matrix or solid support;
  - (ii) adding the test compound and the fusion protein;
  - (iii) adding a first antibody against the fusion protein;
  - (iv) adding a labeled second antibody against the first antibody; and

(v) determining the amount of second antibody bound to the (first antibody-fusion protein-sigma<sup>70</sup> subunit or portion thereof) complex formed on the matrix or solid support.

3. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the sigma<sup>70</sup> subunit or portion thereof is obtained from *Escherichia coli* or *Salmonella typhimurium*.
4. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the anti-sigma<sup>70</sup>-factor AsiA-protein component of the fusion protein has an amino acid sequence as shown in SEQ ID NO: 1 or SEQ ID NO: 2.
5. (canceled)
6. (currently amended) [[A]] The method according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, wherein the ligand is an inhibitor of a bacterial sigma<sup>70</sup> subunit.
7. (new) The method according to claim 1, wherein the fusion protein is produced in a *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* or *Pichia pastoris* expression system.